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REVIEWS AND NOTES

*GESCHICHTE DES NEUHOCHDEUTSCHEN REIMES
VON OPITZ BIS WIELAND* von Friedrich Neumann.
Berlin, 1920. xvi+394 pages.

The author tells us in the preface that the work under discussion was practically completed at the outbreak of the war. So the task was done in times of peace and security; but even if we take this into consideration, we are impressed by the magnitude of the undertaking, the devotion to learning, the infinite care in the sifting and presentation of details, and above all by the courage of the author and the publisher, who immediately after the armistice took up and carried to successful completion their interrupted labors. The appearance of the book at this time is a gratifying proof that German scholarship is still alive, and we may hope for a speedy recovery in spite of the great adversity of present conditions. Neumann's work represents, moreover, very decided progress in the particular field with which it deals. A large amount had already been done in the treatment of individual authors and, in a few instances, smaller groups of authors; but here we have for the first time a comprehensive study of the development of the German rhyme during the period which marks the transition from Middle-High-German to the language of the nineteenth century and the present. The results of Neumann's investigation in their entirety, especially as regards the numerous details concerning the quality of certain vowels, will be fully comprehended by only a smaller number; but every German scholar will appreciate the large, outstanding facts, by the able presentation of which a great deal of light is shed on the present status of German speech sounds, and on the successive stages of development which they underwent in the transition from the Middle-High-German.

Purity of rhyme in the German language is to-day much less of a problem than it was two or three centuries ago. Neumann points out that the individual standard of a given poet, though he may rank high in his time and country, is by no means a reliable criterion. A rhyme must indeed be pure not only to the ears of the poet, but must appeal as pure to all of his readers and hearers who are capable of esthetic enjoyment of his verses. During the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the German language had not yet evolved any real unity, and a common standard of pronunciation did not exist. Hence authors differed greatly in actual usage, being strongly influenced by the manner of utterance prevailing in the native province of each. Neumann shows that regional standards, each possessing aside from common features its particular, dis-

tinguishing traits, may be ascribed to three regions which in those days were leading in poetic productiveness and literary excellence, and he has centered his efforts on these fields without entirely ignoring less important districts. He uses the comparative method throughout, in fact the only way of profitable approach. The resulting main groups are the poets of Silesia, of Upper-Saxony and of Lower-Saxony. In this latter group, he, of course, considers only authors who wrote in High-German. It is very commendable that Neumann does not confine himself to the investigation of the practice which prevailed with the leading poets of each group, but includes a goodly number of the lesser lights, in order to prove that certain standards possessed a general validity in a particular region, and so to establish his curves, if I am permitted to use this term here. The geographic and chronological boundaries of his investigation, he has determined wisely, and it does not matter that in several instances he has not been able to resist the temptation to go beyond his limits, where adjoining territories held some special allurements, as, for instance, in the case of Schubart and Schiller.

Since the treatment of the various *ē*-sounds by different authors furnishes some of the most important data for classification, Neumann has set out with the consideration of these sounds. He distinguishes six different *ē*-sounds: *ō*, *ê*, *æ*, *ē*, *ē̄*, *ǣ*. The following illustrations will serve to make clear the basis of distinction. I *ō*, hören, Ohg. *hōran*, *hōrrēn*; II *ê*, lehren, Ohg. *lêren*; III *ā*, erklären, Mhg. *erklāren*, *klār* < Lat. *clārus*; IV *ē̄*, begehren, Ohg. *gêron*; V *ē*, erzählen, Ohg. *zellan* < *zaljan**; VI *ǣ*, prägen, Ohg. *brāhhēn*, Mhg. *prachen*. Differentiation between *æ* and *ā* seems hardly necessary. The *ō*-sound was not rounded during the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and so it coincided with the Mhg. *ê*; the other four sounds were open. The Silesian poets who at all lived up to the prevailing standards scrupulously distinguished between the open and closed *e*-sounds wherever they were long in quantity. All short *e*-sounds had become open. In the Silesian dialects *ē̄* and *ē* developed along sharply differentiated lines, but this fact is not reflected by the usage of the poets.

Neumann believes it to be the prevalent view that the poets of the earlier Nhg. period failed to make any consistent distinction between the open and closed *e*-sounds. However this may be, he hardly proves his point by referring to Minor. The passage in question in Minor's "Metrik" is not concise enough in its language to admit of a definite inference in regard to the particular poets and period which he had in mind. To be sure, he maintains: "Die verschiedenen e-Laute werden von keinem modernen Dichter unterschieden, auch nicht von Wieland, dessen Mundart sie doch scharf auseinander hält." But he states expressly in regard to Opitz: "Aber in Bezug auf die

verschiedenen Vokale weist er sich als sehr feinfühlig; er verbietet *ehren: nehren*, *lehret: bescheret*, weil hier *e* auf *η* reime, während *lehret: verehret* zu gestatten sei. Er reimt auch in der Praxis nur geschlossenes *e* mit geschlossenem und offenes mit offenem, aber nicht wie unsere heutigen Dichter beide unter einander." Minor does accordingly in this particular full justice to Opitz, and it seems very likely that he had in mind poets of a period later than those chiefly considered by Neumann, when he referred to "moderne Dichter."

The unusual position allotted to "gegen" by the Silesians, Neumann explains in my opinion correctly. Though the expression *ai dē kēnē gin* or *kumma*, etc. is not in vogue in all parts of Silesia, the leading poets of both the Silesian Schools hailed from regions where the idiom is prevalent to this day, and is freely used even by the relatively well educated. One still frequently hears: "In die *kēnē* kommen," etc., hybrid expressions which resulted from the effort to bring terms of dialectic origin in conformity to the literary language.

The Nuremberg poets of Opitz' time are less consistent in their treatment of the different *ē*-sounds, but they follow the same general line of cleavage as the Silesians, grouping closed *ö, œ, ê, ē* and open *ø, ē, ä*." Sigmund von Birken, however, deviates considerably from the general practice.

Zesen, a representative of the Upper-Saxon group, draws the line between *ē: ē*, a distinction not made by the Silesians. Frequently the consonant or consonants following *ē* seem to have a decided influence. An important difference between the Silesians and the Upper-Saxons, for instance, reveals itself in the treatment of the groups *-ör, -êr: -ēr* and *-ör, -êr: -ēr*. The Silesian poets did not bind either group. Of the Upper-Saxons, Fleming, Zesen, Schoch and Hunold use in their works, or that part of their poetic works examined by Neumann, no combinations from group I; the others, with the exception of Gellert and Lessing, do so but very sparingly, while we find numerous instances of combinations from group II in the rhymes of all Upper-Saxon poets. The combinations *-el: -æl* and *-ël: -æl*, on the other hand, we do not find, except in the rhymed verse of Gellert and Lessing, who use both combinations freely. These two also make no longer any distinction between *-ön, -en, -ēn, -æn*. The outstanding feature is that *ö, ê, ē* coincide for the Upper-Saxons, while they are distinguished by the Silesians. The poets of the former group again are differentiated from one another by the degree of precision and consistency with which they separate *ē* from the above mentioned *ē*-sounds. In the technic of the Silesians there prevailed clearness and uniformity; the open and the closed sounds were held apart. The Upper-Saxons approximated such a distinction only in varying degrees; for

the poets of this group who wrote after 1700, the boundaries were more and more obliterated, until at last they disappeared entirely.

In the practice of the Lower-Saxon poets there existed a great deal of diversity. Neumann has dealt with a number of them individually. He finds that one group distinguishes between open and closed $\bar{e}$, though the pronunciation of these sounds differed in a large number of words from that in vogue at that time in Upper-Saxony and Silesia; another group does no longer differentiate between the open and closed $\bar{e}$ -sounds. Here we find, especially in the views of Schottel, the strongest tendency towards this process of levelling which has resulted in the virtual obliteration of distinction between etymologically different $\bar{e}$ -sounds which prevails at the present. It must, of course, be borne in mind that $\bar{o}$ was ultimately established as a rounded vowel, a development foreshadowed by the attitude of the Lower-Saxon poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth century in their treatment of this sound.

Considering geographic position and cultural relations, we are not surprised to find that the East-Prussian poets stood very close to the Silesians. Neumann shows that the Nhg. poets of the period under consideration all distinguished two groups of $\bar{e}$ -sounds, the closed and the open, but the mode of pronunciation of a large number of words differed in different regions, and only the Silesian, East-Prussian and some of the Upper-Saxon poets were at all consistent in their poetic usage.

In central Germany *eu*: *ei*, *ü*: *i*, *ö*: *e* were not distinguished. The Lower-Saxon poets made a distinction in their actual pronunciation and keenly felt the difference in quality, but in their poetic practice they followed the example of the other two groups. The Silesians apparently tried to avoid the combination *eu*: *ei*.

Opitz, Lohenstein, and to some extent Hofmannswaldau, bound *o*: *u*. The other Silesians and the Saxons do not entirely avoid the combination, but instances are after all rare. *Umsonst* or *umsunst* was an especial favorite. Opitz, Lohenstein and Hofmannswaldau furnish also the most numerous instances of $\bar{o}$: *i* combinations, which fact finds an easy explanation in the dialectic pronunciation of $\bar{o}$ in a large number of words in *-nn* and *-mt*, in Silesia still in vogue at the present day.

Those sections of Neumann's work which deal with the quality of the different vowels, especially of the etymologically distinct $\bar{e}$ -sounds, are in my opinion, the most valuable and difficult part of the entire investigation. One may not agree with him in some details, but the main results will certainly stand. We have here an appraisal of the purity of rhyme in a

large number of poets, made according to a uniform standard by one and the same observer. The results are therefore clear and admit of easy comparison. I fully agree with Neumann that it is an entirely mistaken mode of procedure to measure poets of the past by the standards of the present, or of an earlier and totally distinct period, and accordingly label their rhymes as pure or impure, as has been done in a number of instances. Neumann raises repeatedly specific objections, so for instance against Minor's valuation of Goethe's rhymes. It is indeed not well permissible to judge Goethe by the standards of the present, or even by those prevailing in northern and central Germany in his time. The poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth century in general must necessarily be judged by the standards of these periods, and since uniformity did not exist, one must seek to determine the norm for which each individual poet apparently strove, *i.e.*, the one which was valid in his native province; only thus a correct estimate is possible. Some knowledge of the living dialects and the history of their development is indispensable for this purpose. Neumann, it would seem, was well equipped for his task, if I may judge by the knowledge he shows in regard to some of the dialects with which I myself am familiar, more particularly those of Silesia and Upper-Saxony.

The common standard of the literary language in any given territory reflects the underlying dialects usually to a considerable degree, and so many a strange combination of rhymes finds a natural explanation. In Northern Germany, where Low-German prevails as the language of every day, the influence of the native dialect upon poetic diction was rather small, and here the orthography of the language asserted itself more strongly than elsewhere.

Neumann has treated at length the quantity of vowels in the masculine as well as in the feminine rhymes. The Upper-Saxons, particularly Zesen, approximate here most closely the recognized usage of the present. One chapter is devoted to the treatment of vowel+r+consonant, in which combination considerable difference existed. Any one at all familiar with the pronunciation of different regions recognizes at once that differences in quantity in a number of cases still prevail, though a common standard has been established and is generally adhered to by the poets of to-day. The same is true of the treatment of certain consonants or consonant combinations. It seems superfluous to enter here into details.

It becomes clear from Neumann's investigation that the linguistic usage which formed the basis of the Upper and Lower-Saxon poets came most closely to the present norm. The rhymes of Zesen, Rist and Hagedorn, for instance, do not only represent the highest degree of perfection attained at that time,

but sound also very tolerable to the ear of the present generation. The estimate which Belling has put on Lessing's rhymes, Neumann utterly rejects, designating them outright as crude. And one must admit that this seemingly harsh verdict is not without good reasons, whether one applies the present day standard or that valid in Lessing's time in Saxony and Northern Germany in general. Neumann also deals in a briefer manner with the poets of Southern Germany. Here it is interesting to observe that the standards of Northern Germany quite strongly asserted themselves, even with the Swiss authors.

Frequent reference to poetic theory, as in the case of Opitz, Zesen, Harsdörfer, etc. and to the grammarians of those days sheds additional light upon the standards of pronunciation which then prevailed. It is only natural that theory and practice, even where carried on by one and the same individual, do not always agree. In some cases, certain statements were taken *verbatim* from the work of some predecessor, and hence were apt to possess little dynamic value; but above all the living language of a given poet exerts a more potent influence than abstract theories of pronunciation, though they may be his own.

There is abundant evidence that Neumann has made conscientious use of all the literature which has any bearing on his investigation. His presentation of his subject is a very valuable contribution in this field and such a respectable piece of work that he really did not need to offer the apology that it is the performance of a student. A certain lack of unity of form and style does not impair the intrinsic value of his accomplishment. In spite of the great inherent difficulty, the book is typographically nearly perfect, as far as I can judge without actual collation. It is a curious incidence that Neumann furnishes a pretty illustration of the fact that pronunciation, or orthography, or both are in a continual state of flux. Up to page 161 he spells *Flemming*, then, remembering the correct spelling, he writes *Fleming*, relapsing only once (p. 176) into phonetic orthography. A complete index of authors and topics makes the great mass of details presented easily accessible, and the attentive reader will find in Neumann's work light on many phases of present-day pronunciation.¹

JOSEF WIEHR

Smith College

¹In recognition of the scientific value of his work Dr. Neumann has since been awarded the 'Scherer-Preis', which is given triannually for the best contribution to Germanic Philology.—Editor